News Time Review

by Potturi Venkateswara Rao

Editor, Andhra Prabha.

It is true that the men who make history have no time to write it. But some men do write so that their record of performance is projected in a manner they like it to be. Some of the autobiographies of eminent men bear abundant testimony to it. One such autobiography, very surprisingly, is that of Veeresalingam Pantulu, a great social reformer belonging to the latter part of 19th century and early part of this century. Mr. Digavalli Venkata Siva Rao the octogenarian scholar of Andhra Pradesh, discovered a number of distortions and deliberate omissions in the autobiography of Veeresalingam. In his book *Veeresalingam Telugu Needalu* (meaning the bright and dark sides of the personality of Veeresalingam). Mr. Siva Rao lists a number of instances with historic authenticity to prove that Veeresalingam wanted all the credit for the movement of widow marriage. There were several others who led and helped the movement.

Samineni Muddukrishnama Naidu was the person who pioneered the movement Paida Ramakrishnaiah, Atmuri Lakshmi Narasimham, Basava Raju and Eluri Lakshmi Narasimham were the other great men who lent their support to it both financially and otherwise. Even title page of the book depicts Vaeresalingam as 'panchamukheswara' (the five headed personality) with the picture of Naidu standing high above. Mr. Siva Rao did not discover the omissions and commissions all of a sudden, but has been exposing them in his articles published over the last several decades.

Several interesting facts of historic value were incorporated in the book. That some Telugu widows, in the year 1856, petitioned to the then Governor of Madras seeking his mercy for "an enactment with the authority of which Hindu widows may

marry if they chose to" and that two of the petitioners signed in English, was only one such instance.

Mr Siva Rao's book, though pulls down the image of Veeresalingam, is a welcome research work which sets the record of history straight. The Vemana Vikasa Kendram of Vijayawada which was instrumental in bringing out the book promises to publish similar works on Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu, Tripuraneni Ramaswamy, Gurajada and Kattamanchi Ramalinga Reddy.

Mr Digavalli Venkata Siva Rao's work, probably the first of its kind in Telugu, is undoubtly an outstanding research work.